

## Taking on Toxics

Three hearings were held during May of 1999 to give the public an opportunity to comment on the commission's proposed determination that several toxic pollutants exceed water quality criteria in the Delaware River between Trenton, N.J., and the Delaware Bay.

The targeted pollutants are 1,2 - dichloroethane (DCE), tetrachloroethene (PCE), chronic toxicity and acute toxicity.

These pollutants can be toxic to aquatic life and have the potential to be harmful to humans through ingestion of untreated river water and/or the consumption of fish.

Chronic toxicity refers to adverse effects of the wastewater discharges as a whole resulting from exposure over an extended time while acute toxicity refers to short-term adverse effects.

Both DCE and PCE have been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as "probable human carcinogens." Both are solvents used in the manufacture of chemicals and in the dry cleaning business.

The public hearings were held May 3 in Wilmington, Del.; May 5 in at the DRBC office in West Trenton, N.J.; and May 11 in Philadelphia.

The commission's toxics management program is shaped in large part by input from its Toxics Advisory Committee which formed in the early 1990s. Committee members include representatives from the environmental regulatory agencies in the four basin states, the regulated community (municipal and industrial dischargers), the environmental community, academia, agriculture, fish and wildlife management, and public health.

Fish tissue contamination by other toxic pollutants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Delaware River have been highlighted in recent years by the issuance of fish consumption advisories by state environmental agencies. Anglers have been warned either not to eat or reduce consumption of such species as recreational-sized striped bass, catfish, white perch, and American eel.



**Ed Santoro (left), the DRBC's monitoring coordinator, prepares a water sampler before deploying it in the Delaware Estuary, while Dr. Tom Fikslin, head of the commission's Modeling and Monitoring Branch, fills a sample container with river water during a recent toxics study conducted from the deck of a vessel owned by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.**  
*(Photos by Fikslin/Santoro)*

## Water Snapshot '99

Commission staff participated in two well-attended special events around Earth Day, April 22, 1999 to educate the public about the DRBC and its fourth annual "Water Snapshot" project.

On April 17, DRBC representatives spent a breezy Saturday along the White Clay Creek at the Stroud Water Research Center's "UpStream Festival" in Avondale, Chester County, Pa. The following weekend staff relocated to Fred Lewis Island along the Delaware River to participate in the 18th Annual Lambertville (N.J.) Shad Festival.

"The three days provided us with an excellent outreach opportunity," DRBC Executive Director Carol R. Collier said. "Children and adults alike seemed to enjoy the chance to learn from DRBC staff and take some hands-on, water quality measurements."

Staff conducted demonstrations on collecting and analyzing water from the Delaware River and the White Clay, a tributary of the Christina River. Samples were tested for water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and conductivity.

The Stroud Water Research Center, established in 1967, is one of the premier stream research laboratories in North America. Its "UpStream Festival" featured outdoor classroom activities, workshops, crafts, music and exhibits.

The Lambertville Shad Festival celebrates the arrival of spring and heralds the shad's return up the Delaware River to spawn, an unthinkable event 50 years ago when pollution was widespread. The two-day event, sponsored by the Lambertville Area Chamber of Commerce, salutes ongoing efforts to revitalize and maintain the quality of the Delaware River. The festival features shad hauling, arts and crafts, children's activities, entertainment and food.

Participating DRBC staff at both events included Ms. Collier, Bob Kausch, Dave Pollison, Tom Fikslin, Rick Fromuth, Bob Limbeck, Sue Weisman, Todd Kratzer, Forsyth Kineon, Chris Roberts, and Clarke Rupert.



**Sarah Baker of Lambertville, N.J., signs her name to a water quality data collection chart where she posted her monitoring results during the Water Snapshot event in her hometown. (Photo by Chris Roberts)**